

Department of Human Services

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*Important story at this spot

Articles in Today's Clips Thursday, September 14, 2006

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Too Many Oakland Children at Risk

September 14, 2006

Too many times it has been only an incomplete report, a failure to follow up, a misfiled memo or just one case in that stack that somehow piled up in an overworked office -- some little thing that suddenly becomes huge when a child is in danger, or worse.

So it is alarming that nearly 2,000 child abuse or neglect cases are languishing without action in the Oakland County office of the state Department of Human Services, including 600 that are considered high priority. This is not an acceptable situation. Some of these cases may be just backlogged paperwork. But given the number, somewhere in that pile, there are also, inevitably, children in trouble.

The Free Press reported Wednesday on an internal DHS memo showing that in addition to not keeping up with the priority cases, investigators in the Oakland DHS have let another 1,341 reports of children judged to be at low to moderate risk languish without action for more than 60 days -- and some for more than a year. Such reports are supposed to be acted on within 30 days. The office recently filled 25 vacancies to bring its field services staff up to its allotted 52 people, which raises the question: How could the staff possibly expect to keep up when nearly half its positions were vacant? Who left that untenable personnel situation untended for too long?

The office now has instituted mandatory overtime to clear out its backlog, which raises other issues. Investigating reports of child abuse can be high-stress, wrenching work, and it must be done thoroughly and carefully, to follow the law and protect children. If the workload of investigators gets too heavy, the quality could suffer and there will be consequences -- for children and the state.

Oakland County's DHS office was found in contempt of court in March for failing to follow through on a judge's orders covering children in foster care. Evidently, a bad situation was allowed to get worse.

Is there some child in Oakland County who may be in the same position?

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Michigan Report

September 13, 2006

RUFFIN: OMBUDSMAN SHOULD STAY PUT

The Office of Childrens Ombudsman should remain where it's at because the agency does have autonomy from the executive office said Verlie Ruffin, speaking before the House Family and Children Services Committee Wednesday.

Legislation moving the office to the Legislative Council ([HB 6440](#)) is not needed, Ms. Ruffin, said because the Ombudsman Act and Ariana's Law make the agency "objective and independent," but the bill sponsor, [Rep. David Law](#) (R-Commerce Township), said even the possibility of the office being persuaded because of its position under the governor's office means it should be transferred.

Mr. Law said in conversations and testimony he heard across the state as chair of a special committee looking into child protection in the wake of cases such as Ricky Holland, that the agency's reports are first submitted to the Department of Human Services.

"Could the office be truly independent?" he said. "It would be tough."

But Ms. Ruffin, who everybody agreed does a good job as ombudsman, said that while office reports go to DHS there is no editing done there and that the department only provides its responses to the office's recommendations.

Rep. Virgil Smith (D-Detroit) also testified in opposition of the bill, saying that an ombudsman overseen by the Legislative Council for the Department of Corrections was dropped in 2003 because of funding issues and that could happen again under the bill. Committee Chair [Rep. John Stahl](#) (R-North Branch) said it was a concern that the Corrections ombudsman was removed.

After lengthy question and answer between the committee and Mr. Law and Ms. Ruffin, the panel reported out the bill on party-line votes, with [Rep. Dudley Spade](#) (D-Tipton) abstaining. The amended bill removes wording allowing the governor to appoint the ombudsman.

Mr. Law also brought up the issue that he has not received information in the cases of Ricky Holland and Rose Kelley by the office, but Ms. Ruffin said that information, though not subject to privacy standards, would be made available in a closed session, which Mr. Law did not request.

"I can't release information to the Legislature just because you asked for it," she said.

Ingham County Prosecutor Stuart Dunnings also submitted a letter to the committee stating that he could not divulge information that was subject to an ongoing investigation as Mr. Law had requested.

Mr. Law, as a former assistant county prosecutor, said he did not want to hurt the investigations but there is information that could have been released.

From MIRS News Capsule

September 13, 2006

Child Ombudsman Change Moves to Floor

This evening, the House Family and Children Services Committee reported out [HB 6440](#), legislation that would move the state's childrens ombudsman office from the executive branch to the legislative branch.

Under the bill, the ombudsman would be appointed by a 12-member bipartisan legislative council. This aspect had not been determined last week when Rep. David [LAW](#) (R-Commerce Twp.) announced his bill (See "[Child Protection Reform Bills Announced](#)," 9/07/06).

The legislation, which is loaded with both political and substantive implications will likely be taken up Thursday by the full House.

Law testified this evening that the legislation is not aimed at any particular governor or agency.

"I understand that this idea was basically first floated more than four years ago when we had a different administration," Law said. "I think it should have been done then. He (Gov. John **ENGLER**) didn't want it to be done. He was a Republican, and I am a Republican. But I believe it should have been done then.

Some observers have come to believe that in some prominent cases human services officials have hidden behind the shield of "confidentiality" to cover up indications that their mistakes may have contributed to tragedies.

Today, Rep. Brenda [CLACK](#) (D-Flint) asked Law if he was attempting expand upon the confidential information that would be available to the public, and lawmakers.

Law said that wasn't so.

"I'm not attempting to expand the laws as they pertain to confidentiality or changing the role of the ombudsman," Law told the committee. "I'm just trying to help us assure that we'll be getting independent and transparent investigations."

Michigan's current children's ombudsman Verlie **RUFFIN** testified that moving her office under the auspices of the Legislature would be no improvement and actually could diminish the independence of its role.

"I think it could negatively affect our autonomy," Ruffin said. "Right now we don't have any scrutiny by the [department]."

Ruffin, who has only been the ombudsman about seven months, has been operating her office in

the aftermath of the enactment of Ariana's Law in 2005, which empowered the office and gave it a greater scope of operation.

However, Republican lawmakers, due to the recent well-publicized failures of the child protection safety net, are now pushing to have the ombudsman office separated from the administration.

"I believe your department would be able to function better under the Legislature," Rep. Barb [VANDER VEEN](#) (R-Allendale) told Ruffin. "I believe that's substantiated by the experience of states that have separated their ombudsmen from their administrations."

In arguing that her office is already independent Ruffin cited numerous examples of how her office operates under set rules that are not allowed to be breached by legislators or the governor. However, Rep. Jack [HOOGENDYK](#) (R-Kalamazoo) finally cut to the chase.

"The Governor can dismiss you for cause," Hoogendyk said. "As I read the statute, you are to serve at the pleasure of the governor. "

In reply Ruffin pointed out that a legislative council wouldn't be entirely nonpartisan either.

"Yes, but they have less at stake if something happened to make a department look bad, or less credit to take if it were to do something that looked good, for that matter," Hoogendyk responded.

The bill was reported on a 5-3 vote, with Reps. LaMar [LEMMONS](#), Jr (D-Detroit), Gino [POLIDORI](#) (D-Dearborn) joining Clack in voting no. Rep. Dudley [SPADE](#) (D-Tipton) abstained.

Published: September 14. 2006 3:00AM

DETROIT FREE PRESS LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Don't shift foster care responsibility

September 14, 2006

Your Sept. 12 editorial supporting movement of the child foster care ombudsman to the Legislature is just plain wrong. American government depends on there being a clear distinction between the legislative, judicial and executive branches. The proposal you support would blur that distinction, making accountability all the more difficult to establish while dividing responsibility for supervision of the program.

The public wants responsibility for state operating programs to be located in one "the buck stops here" place, the governor's office. The state Constitution demands it.

Grant Parker

Perry



THE ANN ARBOR NEWS

Reform can't wait for next death or election Protecting children should be a priority

Thursday, September 14, 2006

Preventing child abuse and neglect should be a nonpartisan issue, but in an election year, we're not surprised to see it become politicized.

That needs to stop.

The latest legislative moves are in response to the deaths of 7-year-old Ricky Holland of Williamston and 5-year-old Rose Kelley-Bowen of Flint, two children whose tragically short lives were the result of abuse and neglect, according to prosecutors.

Following Ricky's death early this year, Republicans quickly formed a House Special Committee on Child Protection, led by Rep. David Law, R-Commerce Township. Last week, the group unveiled proposals aimed at revamping the system, which clearly failed to protect these two children.

A package of proposed bills would, among other things, move the state's Office of the Children's Ombudsman from the executive branch of government to the legislative service bureau, and increase mandatory reporting and investigation of potential cases of abuse or neglect.

Lawmakers in favor of these changes argue that the ombudsman's office isn't independent now, because of its link to the governor's office. (The ombudsman's position was created in 1994 by former Gov. John Engler.) Yet to think that it would become less politicized under legislative control is truly disingenuous.

Reform of the state's child protection system seems to occur in a series of reactive moves. Most recently, legislation known as "Ariana's Law" was prompted by the death of a 2-year-old girl who was killed by her parents. That law, which took effect in early 2005, gave the ombudsman's office more authority to investigate complaints and better access to records.

Those changes weren't enough to help Ricky and Rose.

If the state is serious about strengthening its child protection system - and it should be - then the Legislature should create a standing committee to make this a priority. Existing work done by the Foster Care Review Board and the Michigan Child Death Review Program (<http://keepingkidsalive.org>), among others, should be closely reviewed as well. And, of course, the system must be sufficiently funded to ensure that those charged with protecting the state's children have sufficient resources to do so.

Until that happens, we'll be stuck in this frustrating cycle, linking reform to another death - or another election.

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Published September 14, 2006
[From the Lansing State Journal]

Local news briefs

Holland jury selection may end today

Eleven more potential jurors for Lisa Holland's trial were dismissed Wednesday, and 30 from a different case that did not go forward were added to the pool, leaving about 80 people.

Ingham County Circuit Judge Paula Manderfield on Wednesday said the jury selection process could be completed today. Opening arguments would begin Monday.

So far, prosecutors have used peremptory challenges to dismiss five potential jurors; defense attorneys have used their challenges to dismiss four. Each side can dismiss up to 12 potential jurors, without reason.

Lisa Holland is charged with murder and child abuse in the death of her 7-year-old adopted son, Ricky. Her husband, Tim Holland, pleaded guilty last week to second-degree murder.

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September 14, 2006

Police: 9 kids alone all night

Children in custody; charges to be sought against Canton Twp. mom.

Christine Ferretti / The Detroit News

CANTON TOWNSHIP -- State children's workers have taken into custody nine children of a single mother who faces charges over claims she left them home alone for several hours overnight Tuesday.

Police officials said they received a call about 8 a.m. Wednesday that the children -- who are 9 months to 13 years old -- were left alone overnight and sought help from a neighbor in the 42000 block of Barchester because they didn't know where their mother was, said Sgt. Rick Pomorski.

All nine children were taken to the Canton Police Department. State Children's Protective Services was contacted and is seeking temporary placement for the children, Pomorski said.

"All nine of the kids were clean, intelligent and well-behaved," he said. "They were just unsupervised and unfed for a period of time."

The mother, believed to be in her mid-40s, was later contacted by a neighbor, who picked her up from a house on the east side of Detroit, where she said she was stranded overnight.

She was questioned by police, who will seek nine misdemeanor counts of contributing to the delinquency of minors, Pomorski said. Misdemeanors carry penalties of 90 days in jail and \$500 fines.

Maria Miller, a spokeswoman for Wayne County Prosecutor Kym Worthy, said Wednesday she has no information about possible charges.

Six of the nine children, believed to be students at Pioneer Middle School and Washington Elementary, missed class on Wednesday because of the incident.

Officials said the family has lived in the house for a month, and they have received no complaints about them.

Barbara Kosciolek lives across the street from the family. She believes they may be renting a duplex.

"I think I have seen them, but I haven't paid too much attention," she said.

Pomorski said the children will not be returned to the mother until the state completes an investigation.

Maureen Sorbet, spokeswoman for the Michigan Department of Human Services, would not comment on the case but did discuss policies the department has followed in related instances.

"If the children come into our care, we look to relatives for placement while we work with the family, and we make recommendations to the court about the best plan for the children," she said. "We cannot take action without court authorization. We make recommendations to the court, and they decide where the children could be placed."

You can reach Christine Ferretti at (734) 462-2289 or cferretti@detnews.com.

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Published September 14, 2006
[From the Lansing State Journal]

Local news briefs

Stepfather's hearing set for today

A preliminary hearing for Steven Lee Moy, 39, who is charged with killing his 1-year-old stepdaughter, is scheduled to begin today in Lansing District Court.

Anishia Moy died Aug. 2 from internal injuries caused by blunt force trauma.

Steven Moy is charged with murder and first-degree child abuse. He has said the child fell off a couch. The preliminary hearing will determine whether the case advances to trial.



Cops probe bleach in baby formula

Thursday, September 14, 2006

HASTINGS -- Hastings police are investigating the Sept. 8 illness of a 9-month-old girl after bleach apparently was added to her baby formula. Several ounces of bleach solution from a bottle was recovered, and a relative might be responsible, police said. The child was taken to Pennock Hospital for treatment and, along with her 3-year-old brother, was placed into protective custody by Child Protective Services. The incident occurred last week in the 400 block of West Mill Street, police said. Deputy Chief Mike Leedy said investigators provided police reports to prosecutors to review for possible charges. The child is expected to fully recover, he said.

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Article published Sep 14, 2006
City man charged in porn inquiry
Suspect offered to train children as 'sex slaves'

By SHANNON MURPHY
Times Herald

A 57-year-old Port Huron man was charged Wednesday in a federal child-pornography case.

Danny William Orr was arraigned in Detroit on charges of distribution of child pornography and interstate travel with the intent to have sex with a child.

Orr was arrested Tuesday at his home in the 2400 block of 19th Avenue by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials and Port Huron police. His arrest came after a nearly two-month investigation during which an undercover customs agent posed as the mother of two young girls and chatted online with Orr, said Gina Balaya, a spokeswoman with the U.S. Attorney's Office in Detroit.

According to a report filed in U.S. District Court in Illinois, Orr talked to the agent several times between July 19 and early September.

The agent, posing as a 34-year-old mother of two girls ages 3 and 5, talked to Orr about bringing her children to Michigan and training them as "sex slaves," the report said. The agent told Orr he was in Decatur, Ill.

Orr confessed, the report said, to having "trained" several other young girls as sex slaves.

The report does not make reference to any local children.

"The suspect made numerous statements about wanting to have sexual contact with the 3- and 5-year-old children. Also during this conversation, the suspect made references to other children that he has sexually assaulted in the past," the report said about a telephone call between Orr and another customs agent who also posed as the mother.

Orr is in federal custody in Detroit, Balaya said. He is expected to be arraigned on similar charges in Illinois

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September 14, 2006

Letter**Swim instructor did nothing inappropriate**

I'm writing in response to Laura Berman's sensational Aug. 26 column "Pedophile shakes parents' trust."

If Berman ever had the privilege to meet "Mr. Don," so accurately described in the beginning of her column, she would understand my outrage.

Don Salata did get in trouble 17 years ago. He was a college student, working with preschool children who were unable to toilet train, and possessed pictures of children in diapers.

His actions were found to be inappropriate, and he paid dearly. An extensive investigation took place, but no evidence of any harm was found, sexual or otherwise.

But the state of Missouri didn't know what to charge Salata with, so they charged him with the lowest count of "child abuse" and "possession/distribution of child pornography."

Don served his time and sought the appropriate help suggested by the courts, and worked hard to start his life over. He does have a gift for swim instruction, with all age groups, especially "water-fearing" children, as any parent who employed him can attest. Many feel he was remiss in continuing to work with children. He somehow hoped his age, maturity and current actions would put his past behind him.

The Detroit News failed to identify any current, inappropriate behavior. Instead it fueled the flames. Now his marriage, career and life, as we know it, have been ruined by an emotional, but ungrounded frenzy that the column unfairly fueled.

Joe Salata Jr.

Brother of Don Salata

Waterford

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September 14, 2006

School to punish driver

Agency says discipline coming in case where bus dropped off special-ed boy at wrong house.

Candice Williams / The Detroit News

HOWELL -- The Livingston Educational Service Agency will initiate disciplinary action against a bus driver and an assistant following a Sept. 7 incident in which a special needs student was dropped off at the wrong house.

"We are taking disciplinary action," LESA Superintendent Sally Vaughn said Wednesday. She said action could be taken as early as Friday. Vaughn said she couldn't reveal details until the investigation wraps up.

"We were all very upset," she said. "It's nothing that should have occurred."

Samuel Jann, 6, was dropped off at the wrong house a few blocks away from his Howell home last Thursday. Because Samuel is autistic and non-verbal, he was not able to alert the driver of the mistake, said Pam Jann, his mother.

After the wrong child was dropped off at Jann's home, she realized her son wasn't on the bus.

"I'm thinking they just switched the two," she said. "I don't know who the boy was. By the time they figured out the problem, the fellow who had received my son called and said his son was wearing the wrong backpack."

The bus driver then picked Samuel up and brought him home. Although the incident lasted less than 10 minutes it felt like much longer, Jann said.

Jann on Wednesday said she is waiting to find out how the incident occurred and what will happen to the bus driver and the assistant. Assistants ride the bus to watch the children and help them get on and off the bus.

Samuel still takes the bus.

"Everybody makes a mistake and this is a really big one," Jann said. "I don't know if this should be tolerated. I want to know how this could happen. Of all the kids in the world, special-ed kids aren't the ones to misidentify."

You can reach Candice Williams at (517) 552-5504 or cwilliams@detnews.com.

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Hillsdale County CAPA appoints new director

Child Abuse Prevention and Awareness of Hillsdale County (CAPA) announced the appointment of new Executive Director Julie Beal.

Beal replaces Laurie Brandes who has accepted a position as coordinator of Human Services Network (HSN) of Hillsdale County.

Beal formerly worked with the Jackson County United Way and holds a bachelor's degree in marketing from Ferris State University.

The board believes Beal “will carry on the mission of shining a light on the problem of child abuse and neglect in Hillsdale County,” according to a press release.

This story was last modified: Wednesday, September 13, 200



Woman wants foster system to change

She has first-hand experience.

PUBLISHED: September 14, 2006

By Maryanne Kocis MacLeod
Macomb Daily Staff Writer

Macomb County resident Jen Gorski, 19, knows first-hand what happens when foster parents are not available.

When Child Protective Services removed her from an abusive home environment in Roseville six years ago, she was committed to a mental institution three hours away. Later she moved into a group home and lived with girls who did not like her and tried to push her down the stairs.

Like Gorski, nearly one-third of all children removed from their homes by Child Protective Services in Macomb County are from Roseville and South Warren.

This Saturday, the Family Resource Networks from these areas are hosting a Parents Morning Out from 10 a.m. until noon for foster parents and those interested in becoming foster parents.

Child care, free massages and makeovers, along with foster care information will be available.

"The biggest thing we want people to know is that it's so important to attract foster parents from the community," explained Monique Hayes, family liaison. "When kids are removed from their families we don't want them to also be removed from their schools, their neighborhoods and their friends."

In 2005, 89 of the 388 children removed from their homes in Macomb County, hailed from the 48089 and 48091 zip codes in south Warren; another 32 were removed from abusive or neglectful homes in Roseville.

Gorski shares her experience in hopes of improving the foster care system and encouraging parents to make a difference.

"Kids who wind up in a group facility don't get the nurturing and support they need to grow up to be healthy young adults," Gorski stressed.

Eventually, Gorski returned to Richmond to live with a foster family for one year before aging out of the system.

Now she has her own apartment, works full-time and is putting herself through nursing school at Macomb Community College.

And in November, Gorski will compete in the Miss Heart of Michigan pageant, a qualifier for Miss Michigan.

"My passion is to help young adults and to advocate for foster youth," Gorski said. "I would like to take the issues of foster youth to a new level of public awareness through pageants. I am hoping to share this passion on a national level and make changes in the foster care system."

Members of the community who wish to support Gorski are invited to take part in a Sept. 19 fund-raiser at BD's Mongolian Barbeque at Hall and Schoenherr roads in Sterling Heights. Seatings are at 6 and 7:30 p.m. Call (586) 263-1420.

A second fund-raiser for Gorski will take place Friday, Sept. 22, at 6:30 p.m. at Apollo Lanes in Roseville. Tickets are \$15 in advance or \$20 at the door and include three games of bowling, shoe rental and refreshments. For more information or to purchase tickets, call Sheri Aikins at (586) 772-3630. Information for either event is also available by calling (586) 822-3224. The Parents Morning Out will be held at Mount Calvary Community Center, 8129 Packard, Warren 48089. Please RSVP to Monique Hayes at (586) 758-1253.

Click here to return to story:

http://www.macombdaily.com/stories/091406/loc_foster001.shtml

Teen recounts struggle with cutting

By Mardi Suhs

Cadillac News

EVART - Fifteen-year-old Ashley raised both arms in a silent cheer when she heard the name of the judge who sent her to a residential treatment center called Pathway of Hope.

When she arrived at the center last year, Ashley said her life "wasn't going anywhere. I didn't care what was going to happen to me."

"One year ago," she stated, "you would have seen a girl that was broken, depressed and angry. You would have seen a girl that didn't want any love from anybody and tried to push everybody away."

In fact, Ashley tried to run away. And then she started acting out because she didn't want to be at Pathway of Hope.

"I was just doing things I shouldn't be. I cut a lot. If I couldn't find something to cut myself with I did it with my nails. I can say cutting consumed me when I was upset."

Cutting is a form of self-injury that experts say develops when a person does not have a healthy way to deal with strong emotions.

Some people who cut have suffered a traumatic experience, such as living through abuse, violence, or a disaster.

In the conference room of the Cadillac News, Ashley sat with Scott Gardner, the founder of Pathway of Hope, and slowly retold the story of her life, including the abuse and neglect that had her removed from her home.

"It was really taking its toll on me," she admitted. "It was just a lot of stress and it was really tiring."

Now, after one year in treatment at Pathway of Hope, Ashley is ready to start a new life. It took a year of hard work, therapy and counseling, but she has changed.

"There's a lot of ways that I have changed," she confessed, recounting her year of working through issues of abandonment, rejection, anger, sadness and low self-esteem.

And a newfound faith in God has helped give her hope for a better future.

Pathway of Hope, founded in 2002 by Scott Gardner, a former drug addict who was sexually abused as a child, provides residential treatment for troubled and hurting girls ages 10 to 18. Gardner, who transformed his life "through the word of God" and earned a master's degree in Christian Counseling, stated "the word has benefited me and so it's our goal and our aim to implement the scripture throughout treatment."

Ashley said it's her dream to be adopted into a loving home. She's waiting for that chance. Her name is on a list.

Pathway of Hope is staging a Murder Mystery Dinner Theater on Saturday at the First Baptist Church in Cadillac to raise money to build an addition to the house. The organization's goal is to house three more girls, providing space for 12 altogether.

For information on children in foster care available for adoption, visit www.mare.org or www.michigan.gov/dhs.

Your local connection

€ What: Murder Mystery Dinner Theater to benefit Pathway of Hope residential treatment center for troubled girls in Evart

€ When: 5:30 p.m. Saturday

€ Where: First Baptist Church Commons, 125 Stimson St.

€ Cost: \$25 single ticket or \$135 for a table of six

€ Tickets: Available at the Gospel Bookstore and Horizon Books

news@cadillacnews.com | 775-NEWS (6397)



Some victims don't follow up after protection orders granted

GENESEE COUNTY

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Thursday, September 14, 2006

By Ron Fonger

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GENESEE COUNTY - Personal protection orders, designed to shield people who fear for their lives, are regularly being tossed out - not because evidence is lacking, but because victims never return to claim them.

In some months this year, as many as 20 percent of granted PPOs - almost 100 for the first five months of 2006 - ended up dismissed after victims didn't pick up and serve the paperwork on the accused.

"We're eating up (resources), and we can't even get the petitioners (to follow up)," said Sonya McLaurin, direct services provider for Flint's city attorney's office. "It's like a day goes by and the honeymoon (between victim and abuser) is back on."

The city attorney's office, along with the YWCA and the county clerk's office, assists victims in filing requests for protection orders with the county clerk.

The state Legislature created PPOs in 1994 so that victims of abuse or harassment could get legal protection quickly and at little or no cost. They can prohibit the person named in it from various acts, such as entering a victim's premises or any place the victim frequents, or assaulting the victim.

Genesee Circuit Judge Duncan M. Beagle said last week that he's willing to talk with victims' rights advocates about what's causing the breakdown. Judges already have discussed the continuing problem in meetings amongst themselves.

"I get frustrated," said Beagle, one of the county family court judges who reviews requests for PPOs. "The dust settles, and they've kissed and made up."

Protection orders aren't automatically granted. Almost one of every four requests filed is turned down by the judges who review them.

Orders that judges approve have to be picked up and served on defendants before they can take effect and be put into force.

Those on the receiving end of a PPO have to be served so they know how far they have to stay away from the victim and what other restrictions the judge has set.

McLaurin said victims may change their minds about pushing ahead with a protection order because they are intimidated, believe they already have made their point by making the request or don't want to pay \$20-\$25 to have the order served.

"For a lot of people, \$20 is a lot," she said. "We noticed last year we had a lot of PPOs granted but we couldn't get the respondent (back)."

QUICK TAKE

Second thoughts

Every week, dozens of people ask Genesee Circuit Court judges for personal protection orders to keep away people who have threatened or hurt them. But some of the PPOs are never picked up or legally served and end up dismissed. Here's what has happened this year:

- JANUARY: 139 granted, 29 never picked up.
- FEBRUARY: 109 granted, 18 never picked up.
- MARCH: 179 granted, 15 never picked up.
- APRIL: 134 granted, 27 never picked up.
- MAY: 155 granted, nine never picked up.

===

Getting a PPO

- Applications for a PPO are available

Lore Rogers, director of domestic violence and sexual assault services for the YWCA of Greater Flint, said some victims stop after they file their PPO application, believing they won't be assaulted again.

The Flint Journal was unable to reach several PPO applicants for comment.

Court officials are sometimes left in a difficult situation if they try to follow up because an attacker can lash out again against a victim if they realize the victim is looking for protection.

Only the strongest cases of stalking or domestic violence result in a protection order.

Through May of this year, 2,731 people had come to the clerk's office that handles PPOs.

But many of them never made a formal request; only 944 filed for the protective orders.

Of those requests, 716 were approved, 228 were denied and 98 were terminated when no one picked them up.

Clerk Michael J. Carr said the lack of follow-up wastes the time of judges and county employees who process the requests and help victims answer questions on applications.

"It's a real problem," Carr said. "I think if we could charge (to file the request), ... that would discourage a lot of it."

from the Genesee County clerk's office, located on the second floor of the county courthouse, 909 S. Saginaw St., Flint.

- The law gives judges the authority to issue protection orders in cases where a petitioner has been assaulted, threatened or stalked.
- PPO conditions can include forbidding a person from following or appearing within the sight of the petitioner, contact by telephone or sending mail.
- After completing an application, orders are generally granted or denied within three days.
- Petitioners must pick up granted orders and have them served on the defendant by a process server or another person.

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Woman gets jail in man's stabbing

Thursday, September 14, 2006

By Steven Hepker

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A Jackson woman who stabbed her ex-boyfriend Jan. 4 was sentenced Wednesday to 330 days in jail.

Nichole Kluk, 24, pleaded guilty to assault with intent to harm Matthew Hill, the father of her 3-year-old daughter. Prosecutors dropped charges of assault with intent to murder and felonious assault.

"She stabbed her ex-boyfriend with a knife, perforating his liver, and he spent three days in the University of Michigan Hospital trauma center," Assistant Prosecutor Nick Mehalco Jr. said. He sought the maximum sentence of a year in jail.

Circuit Judge Chad Schmucker came close with 330 days. She gets credit for 71 days she already had served.

"A fraction of an inch different and this could have been a homicide case," he said.

Schmucker urged Kluk to get treatment for "emotional and mental-health problems" that frequently get her into trouble.

Officials said Kluk has a history of depression but was not taking medication in January when she attacked Hill, who has three convictions for domestic violence against Kluk.

"I'm sorry for what I've done," Kluk told the judge.

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Michigan Report

September 13, 2006

AUGUST JOBLESS RATE INCHES UP

Unemployment in Michigan reached 7.1 percent on a seasonally adjusted basis, according to figures released Wednesday by the Department of Labor and Economic Development.

The July unemployment rate totaled 7 percent. In August 2006 the unemployment rate stood at 6.7 percent.

The jobless rate was affected by a drop in the overall labor force, with a total labor force during the month of 5.086 million, a drop of 9,000.

The total number of people employed stood at 4.726 million, down 13,000 from July. The number of people unemployed, however, was up by only 4,000 to 360,000.

Surprisingly, manufacturing jobs went up by some 11,000 during the month. There were also increases in the leisure and hospitality services and the professional and business services. The biggest decline in jobs was in government employment, showing a drop of 4,000 during the month.

The national unemployment rate during August was 4.7 percent.

From MIRS News Capsule

September 13, 2006

August Unemployment Inches Up To 7.1 Percent

The state's unemployment rate during the month of August edged up from 7 percent in July to 7.1 percent in August, according to a report released today by the Department of Labor and Economic Growth (DLEG).

"Michigan's average jobless rate this year remains close to 2005 levels," said Rick **WACLAWEK**, director of the DLEG's Bureau of Labor Market Information and Strategic Initiatives. "Despite some job gains in the service sector, restructuring in the auto industry has kept overall jobs below year-ago levels."

The August unemployment rate of 7.1 percent was up four-tenths of one percentage point over the state's 2005 annual average unemployment rate of 6.7 percent.

While the household survey showed more unemployed workers this month, the news was mixed as the survey of employers showed an increase of 18,000 payroll jobs. Of those 18,000 new jobs, some 11,000 came from the manufacturing sector. Lesser increases were recorded in leisure and hospitality services (up 4,000) and professional and business services (up 3,000).

The sector of the economy showing the only significant decline in employment was government.



Local plan to involve dads gets state cash

Thursday, September 14, 2006

By Susan J. Demas

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More than four in 10 babies are born out of wedlock in Jackson County -- and they may never know their dads. The news is slightly less grim in Hillsdale County, where about one-third of infants are born to unwed mothers, 2004 Kids Count data indicates.

To help parents and children in both counties, state Department of Human Services officials this week said they'll grant up to \$170,000 for hands-on programs through 2008.

"We were impressed with Jackson, which has a long history with working with fathers," said Duane M. Wilson, DHS state program coordinator.

The Community Action Agency kicked off its Proud Parents and Proud Fathers initiatives at Lincoln School in July.

The programs netted an initial DHS grant of almost \$30,000 and are eligible for up to \$70,000 annually for two more years.

Head Start, a Community Action affiliate, has reached about 70 dads in initiatives since 2002. What's new about the Proud Parents and Proud Fathers classes is that they're open to all parents, regardless of income.

The state will spend up to \$1 million on 19 programs across the state, decided through a competitive bid process. Spokeswoman Maureen Sorbet said it's part of the department's shift to proactive initiatives.

Michigan ranks 29th in the country with 31 percent of households led by single parents.

Children from broken families are at risk for abuse, poverty, truancy, drug abuse and dropping out of school, statistics show.

Fathers play a key part in changing that, said Bob Pletcher, Community Action's male involvement educator.

"There's a whole generation now of men under 25 or 30 who grew up without a dad and don't have a clue about fatherhood," he said.

The first Proud Fathers program will graduate seven participants this month.

Planned sessions include parenting techniques, relationship choices and how to stay involved with kids who don't live with you.

Pletcher summed up the program's philosophy: "No. 1: Men have to step up to the plate. No. 2: We show you how to do it."

Six couples are set to complete the Proud Parents class this month.

Both programs are part and parcel with the Healthy Marriage Initiative started in January by United Way of Jackson County.

Coordinator Shelby Raines said the difference is that her new program is geared to married couples, while CAA's new initiatives aim to reach all parents.

"We're both trying to strengthen local families," Raines said.

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[From the Lansing State Journal]

Local news briefs

Eaton child support goes electronic

CHARLOTTE - Beginning this month in Eaton County, child support payments will be directly deposited electronically into personal checking, savings accounts or debit card accounts, said Allen Schlossberg, Eaton County's Friend of the Court.

In Eaton County alone, about 12,500 cases are monitored by the Friend of the Court.

The electronic payment system was rolled out under a new state law in November 2005 in four "pilot" counties, and has since been expanded to 70 more counties. "We have been told that it is working very well. It is a blessing for everybody, and it should spell the end to the checks floating through the mail somewhere," Schlossberg said.

Department of Human Services thanks community donors

Gladwin County Record

To the Editor:

VIG/OR, Volunteers in Gladwin Outreach, would like to send a huge thank you to all of the Gladwin County merchants who contributed 171 prizes toward our 11th annual Summer Raffle.

VIG/OR is the volunteer arm of the Gladwin County Department of Human Services. The monies raised will be used primarily at Christmas to assist needy children in Gladwin County with toys and clothes.

In no particular order these are the area merchants and individuals we wish to thank: Lori Molesworth, Jan Sheehan, MMMC Hospital Auxiliary, Vance and Jackie Southwell, Hometown Feed & Seed, Cindy Frank, Beaverton Hardware & Sports, Lee Otto-Gladwin, Flower Scents in Beaverton, Lang Pizza, K-Hardware-Edenville, Auto Value - Beaverton, Dollar General - Beaverton, Downtown Salon, Mich. Tech. Computer Service, Gladwin Hobby Shop, G & D Feed & Seeds, Lifeline Marina, Buck and Eleanor Southwell, Videos Etcetera, Village Flower & Gifts, Room Full of Notions, Northern Appliance, Simply Charmed, Dollar Palace, Rudy's Barber Shop, Country Corner Bulk Foods, Alward Electric, Pizza Hut, Mainstreet Athletic Club, Chee Peng, Flynn Lumber & Supply, R & G Low Mart, Cloverleaf Landscaping, Sami's Personal Touch, Wilma's Ultimate Touch, Back Door Deli, Citgo Car Wash, Cheezer's Deli, Blue Ribbon Bakery, Leatonville Gardens, Robin's Restaurant, Hungry Howie's Pizza, Virginia Shinavar, Little Caesar's Pizza, Gladwin Hair Care, English Rose Antiques, Uptown Salon, Northern Espresso, Dee Gauthier, Sugar Shack, Mr. M's, Cedar Creek, Stone Cottage Gardens, Corner House Ice Cream Parlor, Myers for Tires, Gladwin Heights Golf Course, I Do Baskets by Kathy Molski, Pepper Mill Restaurant, Ace Hardware, Cedar Ave Inn, Lakeside Golf Course, Vasher's Country Gardens, Mid-Michigan Auto Glass, Subway, Sugar Springs Golf Course, The Camp, Sue Sews, Amazing Boxers, Grondin's Hair Care, Buckeye Market, Frank Ward Co., Steve's Custom Feeds, Gladwin Tire Co., Stryker's Lakeside Marina Edenville, Meadow Lanes, Family Store M-30, Slyder's, Merchandise Outlet, PJ Cut & Curl Salon, Kelly's Place, Madge Longstreth, The Blackberry Lodge, Gayle Reid, Phil Caffery-State Farm, Oak Outlet, Stables Printing/Vinyl Graphics.

Dan Sheehan

Community Resource Coordinator

Gladwin County DHS